



ACCESS CURRENTS

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New ABA Access Standards Take Effect for Postal Facilities

New accessibility standards have taken effect for facilities built, altered, or leased by the U.S. Postal Service. These standards are based on updated guidelines the Board issued last year under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) which ensures access to federally funded facilities. The standards apply to new construction and alteration projects, including additions, as of October 1, as specified in a notice the Postal Service issued last May. This includes both facilities owned and those leased by the Postal Service

Several other Federal agencies are responsible for similar action that will apply the new guidelines to other types of ABA facilities. These include the Department of Defense (DOD) for military facilities, the Department of Housing and Urban Development for residential facilities, and the General Services Administration (GSA) for all other types of federally funded buildings. GSA is awaiting clearance on its notice, which would implement the new standards six months from the publication date. The new ABA standards, as adopted by these agencies, will replace the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS).

The Board's updated guidelines, which are driving this replacement, also will serve to update the standards used to enforce the ADA. ADA standards are maintained by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and, in the case of transit facilities, the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Board updated the ABA and ADA guidelines jointly and reconciled differences between them so that a more uniform level of access is specified under both laws. This will greatly facilitate compliance, but the benefits will not be effectively realized until each of the ADA and ABA standards is updated and in effect because it is the standards, not the Board's guidelines, that govern.

In the interim, it is particularly important to know which agency's standard applies to a given construction or alteration project and whether the existing or new standard is in effect. The Board is tracking the progress made by the standard-setting agencies to keep users up-to-date. A new web page on the Board's site provides the status on each agency's effort and indicates which version of the ADA or ABA standards to follow at this time. This information, which includes direct links to referenced standards, implementing regulations, and notices, is posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/standards-update.htm.

ADA Facilities	Agency	Status of Update
Public Accommodations Commercial State/ Local Government Transportation	DOJ DOT	Advance notice issued for comment; next steps include a follow-up notice, another round of comment, and finalization Final notice pending
ABA Facilities	Agency	Status of Update
Postal	USPS	New standards replacing UFAS took effect October 1, 2005
Federally funded (other than postal, military, or residential)	GSA	Notice pending; effective date to be 6 months from date of notice
Military	DOD	[No estimate yet]
Residential	HUD	[No estimate yet]

GSA Building Standards to Improve Access at Entrances

In addition to its ABA accessibility standards, GSA's Public Building Service (PBS) maintains design standards and criteria for new buildings, major and minor alterations to existing facilities, and work to historic structures. Known as the *Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service*, they contain mandatory policy and technical criteria to be used in the programming, design, and documentation of GSA buildings. These standards include provisions that address accessibility.

The latest edition of the *Facilities Standards* (March 2005) contains a new requirement for automated doors at all public entrances required to be accessible. Under this provision, at least one door at each such entrance (or two where there is an entry vestibule) must be automated in compliance with the ABA standards, which address fully automated, low-powered, and power-assisted types of doors. The GSA requirement exceeds existing requirements which, like the Board's guidelines, cover technical criteria for automated doors where provided but do not mandate automation of doors. Automating exterior doors is extremely beneficial for access since the exterior opening force can be significant due to a variety of factors, including door weight, wind loading, gasketing, air pressure, and HVAC systems. The standards are available on GSA's website at www.gsa.gov/P100. The new provision is located in Chapter 3 Architecture and Interior Design, section 3.5, page 85.



Courthouse Access Advisory Comm. Meeting

Hiram Johnson
State Building
455 Golden Gate Ave
Nov. 17th (9-5)
Nov. 18th (9-3)

Courthouse Advisory Committee to Meet in San Francisco

The Courthouse Access Advisory Committee will hold its next quarterly meeting November 17th and 18th in San Francisco. The Board organized this committee last year to develop design solutions and best practices for ensuring access to courthouses which pose unique challenges to accessible design. In addition, the committee is exploring outreach and partnership opportunities for disseminating the information to be developed in order to promote accessible courthouse design.

The Committee has organized subcommittees focused on courtroom access issues, courthouse areas other than courtrooms, and education and outreach. Most of the meeting time will be used for break-out subcommittee sessions. The meeting, which is open to the public, will be held at the Hiram Johnson State Building, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco. The meetings will start at 9:00 both days and end at 5:00 on the first day and at 3:00 on the second. For further information, contact the Board at caac@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0026 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Comment Period Closes on Draft Guidelines for Voting Systems

In June, the Election Assistance Commission released for public comment draft guidelines for voting systems to assist states in complying the Help America Vote Act of 2002. This law calls for improvements in the usability and reliability of voting systems used in Federal elections. The law ensures that voting systems and polling places are accessible to people with disabilities and also covers ballot verification by voters, language barriers, and provisional voting.

The Commission's guidelines provide criteria for accessibility, as well as voting system usability, security, and privacy. Specifications address access to voting equipment for all types of users, including those with vision impairments. During the comment period, which closed September 30th, the Commission held public hearings in various locations across the country. The Commission will review the comments it received, make revisions to the guidelines as necessary, and release them in final form. For further information, visit the Commission's website at www.eac.gov. Submitted comments are posted on its website.

International Code Council Posts Information on Accessibility

The International Code Council (ICC), which develops and maintains model building codes in the U.S., has posted new information on accessibility on its website. The ICC's International Building Code (IBC) is used by many states and local jurisdictions and includes provisions for building accessibility. The new information explains how access is addressed by the IBC and its relationship to other requirements, such as the standards used to enforce the ADA.

The ICC also has issued new brochures, including one on IBC's coverage of accessibility and another specific to IBC requirements for accessible means of egress. The Board and the ICC coordinated at length to harmonize differences between the IBC and the updated ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines. The new edition of the Board's guidelines ensures greater consistency by referencing IBC provisions for accessible means of egress. Thus, the new brochures are helpful in understanding both the IBC and sections of the ADA and ABA guidelines. The material on accessibility, including copies of these brochures, is posted on ICC's website at www.iccsafe.org/safety/accessibility/index.html.

Report Issued from Board Sponsored Study on Wheeled Mobility

A report, *Standards and Anthropometry for Wheeled Mobility*, is now available from a study the Board commissioned on wheeled mobility and human measures. The report was prepared by the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA Center) at the State University of New York at Buffalo which is undertaking a major multi-year project to collect human measures data on people who use wheeled mobility aids. Started in 1999, this work will continue at least through 2006. The research team is gathering data at various locations across the U.S. to ensure a representative sample.

According to Dr. Edward Steinfeld, Project Director, sufficient data has been collected to start a dialogue on some of the findings, which suggest that current accessibility standards may not be adequate for today's population of people who use wheeled mobility aids. Drawing upon information collected and developed in completed phases of the project, the report reviews research conducted in other countries (Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada) and its influence on their access standards. The comparative analysis developed for this report provides a framework for the future comparison of research findings and standards and offers a foundation for improving the utilization of research for standards development. The analysis highlights the importance of integrating research with standards development, organizing international research collaborations, and developing international standards, all of which the IDEA Center is helping to advance with support from the Board in addition to its ongoing work collecting human measures data. The report is available on the IDEA Center's website at <http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/Anthro/index.asp>.

Research on Detectable Warnings

Detectable warnings, a distinctive surface pattern of domes detectable by cane or underfoot, are used to alert people with vision impairments of their approach to streets and hazardous drop-offs. Under the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), they are required at curb ramps, which remove a tactile cue otherwise provided by curb faces, and other areas where pedestrian ways blend with vehicular ways. They are also required along the edges of boarding platforms in transit stations. In its rulemaking on public rights-of-way, the Board is revisiting the requirements for detectable warnings on curb ramps and other sidewalk areas. In light of some of the questions and issues raised, the Board has promoted the need for research on various aspects of detectable warnings which can help inform its rulemaking. One project on durability is to be undertaken and another on visibility issues is underway.

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TRB Project on Durability Testing and Evaluation

The Transportation Research Board (TRB), a nonprofit institution that promotes innovation and progress in transportation through research and dissemination of information, is seeking proposals for a project on evaluating the long-term performance and durability of various detectable warning products and materials. The project, to be awarded under TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program, will seek to develop testing and evaluation procedures to assist in the selection of products and solutions based on local conditions, such as climate, maintenance practices, construction methods, underlying surfaces, and other factors. A total of \$350,000 has been budgeted for this project. The deadline for submitting proposals is November 10th. For further information, visit TRB's website at www4.trb.org/trb/crp.nsf/All+Projects/NCHRP+4-33.

FHWA Project on Visibility of Detectable Warnings

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is conducting research on the visibility of detectable warnings for people with low vision in order to develop more specific guidance on visual properties, including color, contrast, and reflectance. Specifications for detectable warnings focus on tactile features but also call for visual contrast between the warning field and the area surrounding it for the benefit of people with low vision. Fifty people with low vision participated in testing the visibility of a variety of detectable warning colors and contrasts. Testing, which was completed in August, was conducted on 13 different colors or markings against the colors of common sidewalk or street materials (concrete, brick, and asphalt). Preliminary results confirm that warning patterns of the same color as the surrounding sidewalk do not provide sufficient visual contrast and that a high luminance contrast over 60%, either light-on-dark or dark-on-light, should be provided (the Board's guidelines recommend at least 70%). A report on the study will be available in coming months. For further information, contact Joe Moyer of the FHWA at (202) 493 3370 or Joe.Moyer@fhwa.dot.gov (email).

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

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